NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

THESIS

KTO I KUDA?: **RUSSIA, LANGUAGE, AND NATIONAL IDENTITY**

by

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December 2009

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE		*Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188*
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instruction, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188) Washington DC 20503.		
1. AGENCY USE ONLY *(Leave blank)*	**2. REPORT DATE** December 2009	**3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED** Master's Thesis
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE *Kto i Kuda?*: Russia, Language, and National Identity		**5. FUNDING NUMBERS**
6. AUTHOR(S) Torgersen, Dale G.		
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Naval Postgraduate School Monterey, CA 93943-5000		**8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER**
9. SPONSORING /MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) N/A		**10. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER**
11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government.		
12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited		**12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE** A

13. ABSTRACT (maximum 200 words)

Language is often linked with identity. In fact, language is sometimes such a powerful force that it can transcend or replace the resilient forces of ethnic or cultural identity. However, just as language has such an impressive ability to transcend ethnic and cultural barriers to unite disparate peoples, it has the equal ability to stir powerful nationalistic, ethnic, and cultural passions in groups of people who feel their language is under attack. This is precisely because language is more than just a tool for communication; it is a basic element of group identity. It is within this framework that this thesis examines the language policies of the former Soviet Union and its successor state, the Russian Federation. The thesis concludes that the language policy coming out of the Kremlin today is simply a continuation of the Soviet policy of using language as tool to homogenize those who are near the seat of power and exert pressure and influence in places that are removed from it.

14. SUBJECT TERMS Russian Language, Language Policy, Russification, Russia, Russian Federation, Soviet Union, Former Soviet Union, Identity, Nationalist, Nationalism, *russkie, rossiianne,* Baltic States, Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova, Pushkin, Lermontov, Tolstoy, Romanov Dynasty, Bolsheviks, Communist Party, Lenin, Stalin, Khrushchev, Brezhnev, Gorbachev, Yeltsin, Putin.		**15. NUMBER OF PAGES** 47
		16. PRICE CODE
17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT Unclassified	**18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE** Unclassified	**19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT** Unclassified	**20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT** UU

NSN 7540-01-280-5500

Standard Form 298 (Rev. 2-89)
Prescribed by ANSI Std. 239-18

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KTO I KUDA?: RUSSIA, LANGUAGE, AND NATIONAL IDENTITY

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN SECURITY STUDIES
(EUROPE AND EURASIA)**

from the

**NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL
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Language is often linked with identity. In fact, language is sometimes such a powerful force that it can transcend or replace the resilient forces of ethnic or cultural identity. However, just as language has such an impressive ability to transcend ethnic and cultural barriers to unite disparate peoples, it has the equal ability to stir powerful nationalistic, ethnic, and cultural passions in groups of people who feel their language is under attack. This is precisely because language is more than just a tool for communication; it is a basic element of group identity. It is within this framework that this thesis examines the language policies of the former Soviet Union and its successor state, the Russian Federation. The thesis concludes that the language policy coming out of the Kremlin today is simply a continuation of the Soviet policy of using language as tool to homogenize those who are near the seat of power and exert pressure and influence in places that are removed from it.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my thesis advisor, Dr. Mikhail Tsypkin. Despite the many demands on his time, he always cheerfully made space for me in his schedule. His input on my thesis was invaluable.

Many thanks to my co-advisor, Boris Keyser, whose insight into Russian culture helped me immensely.

Most importantly, I wish to thank my family, especially my wife, Michelle, without whose support, I would not be where I am today.

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I.   INTRODUCTION

Language is often linked with identity. In fact, language is sometimes such a powerful force that it can transcend or replace the resilient forces of ethnic or cultural identity. However, just as language has such an impressive ability to transcend ethnic and cultural barriers to unite disparate peoples, it has the equal ability to stir powerful nationalistic, ethnic, and cultural passions in groups of people who feel their language is under attack. This is precisely because language is more than just a tool for communication; it is a basic element of group identity. It is within this framework that this thesis aims to examine the language policies of the former Soviet Union and its successor state, the Russian Federation. Before taking the issue of language and identity head on, however, this thesis will present a brief discussion of what "Russian Identity" means in general.

From the outset of the Soviet Union to its collapse, Soviet leaders struggled to balance the implementation of a lingua franca that could help strengthen ties between the individual republics with the ability and opportunity for each individual republic to maintain its own cultural and ethnic identity. Language policy continues to be of concern in current-day Russia; however, the issue has taken on dimensions different from those during Soviet times. This thesis will devote some analysis to why particular language policies were chosen in the Soviet Union, but that analysis must be viewed with an understanding of the difficult circumstances under which it is considered; as one researcher states on this subject, "One cannot assume that any [proposed or legislated] policy was actually implemented, any more than one can assume that the purported motivation behind a given piece of legislation was genuine," given the opacity with which the Soviet Regime conducted itself.[1] The analysis devoted to the policies of the Russian Federation will be somewhat speculative as well, as the research for this thesis has revealed little in the way of policy justifications. Finally, this work will consider what

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[1] Lenore A. Grenoble, *Language Policy in the Soviet Union* (Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2003), vii.

effects these policies had on many of the Soviet Republics and continue to have in the Russian Federation by following language policy development from the inception of the Soviet Union, through its collapse, to the present.

The Soviet Union and its successor state, the Russian Federation, offer substantial insight into the interplay between language and identity. They, like many other nations, have struggled with integrating a multiethnic state under a single, unified banner. Neither the Soviet Union nor the Russian Federation has provided a complete solution to the problem, perhaps because there is none. Nevertheless, the Soviet leaders may have been on the right track, at least in part. They attempted to unite all of the disparate peoples under the umbrella of an idea that was not based on ethnic derivation—they chose the ideology of Marxism/Communism as their unifier. Their ultimate failure, however, was two-fold. First, the idea they chose was fundamentally flawed; Marxism and Communism have never worked as successful long-term economic or political models. And second, the Soviet leaders eventually began actively (and sometimes aggressively) to encourage, or in some cases even coerce, the peoples of the Soviet Union to meld their own unique national identities, hollow though they might have been, with a primarily Russian idea of the proper Soviet citizen, as opposed to persuading them to come willingly.[2]

Some leaders of the Russian Federation have moved closer to a successful solution in this regard. They have attempted to present the Russian Federation to its populace as a civic idea, not an ethnic one—even though there are still some fairly nationalistic trappings connected with its language policies. If governmental leaders are successful in transforming Russia into a truly civic entity, then perhaps they will be able to reach a point where the ethnic minorities in Russia no longer pose a threat to stability, because they will be convinced that Russia is, in reality, for all *rossiianne* (Russian citizens) and not just *russkie* (ethnic Russians).

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[2] See Teresa Rakowska-Harmstone, "Minority Nationalism Today: an Overview," in Robert Conquest, ed., *The Last Empire* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1986), 235–253, and John D. Dunlop, "Language, Culture, Religion and National Awareness," in Robert Conquest, ed., *The Last Empire* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1986), 265–289.

II. THE ESSENCE OF RUSSIANNESS

A. INTRODUCTION

Anyone conversant with the long and tumultuous history of Russia, where "Russia" comprises anything from Kievan Rus' to the current Russian Federation, can attest that the nation regularly referred to as Russia has continually struggled to define itself and where it fits in relation to the other nations of the world. This struggle has always existed and continues in Russia to this day. Throughout history, Russian politicians, poets, and even some peasants have asked themselves: Are Russia's cultural, social, and religious ties closer to the West or the East? Is Russia—or should Russia aspire to be considered—a Western nation? Is Russia, in reality, a Eurasian nation, unique and separate from any in the East or the West? If these questions can be answered at all, they are impossible to answer until one first answers a more fundamental question: What is a Russian? This chapter endeavors to discuss the elements that make up the "Russian" identity and the reasons that Russia has, for much of its history, been restless about its place in the world.

B. THE TROUBLE WITH IDENTITY

Before tackling identity in the Russian context, a few notes about notes about identity in general must be made. While the concept of identity per se is not new, national identity as connected to the nation-state is a fairly modern concept, with its genesis in Europe. Not until the Peace of Westphalia was the idea of the nation-state formalized and codified; before that time, the idea of a sovereign state did not exist in the way it is understood today. Nevertheless, the literature on the social identity shows "that most people have a deep need to belong to groups."[3] Accordingly, before the Peace of Westphalia, the peoples of Europe organized themselves along cultural, linguistic, and religious lines that had no clearly fixed boundaries. When the concept of state sovereignty was introduced, the peoples of Europe were expected, even required, to

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[3] Jeff Spinner-Halev and Elizabeth Theiss-Morse, "National Identity and Self-Esteem," *Perspectives on Politics* 1 (2003): 523.

change their group allegiances from cultural (or linguistic or religious) to political. Of course, changing such allegiances was easier said than done; nevertheless the seeds of national identity and nationalism as the primary drivers of social identity were planted and given room to grow.

Prior to the Peace of Westphalia, nationalistic allegiances did not exist because the idea of a nation as a political entity had not yet been introduced to the psyches and lexicons of the peoples of Europe. Several hundred years later, however, "nation-ness is the most universally legitimate value in the political life of our time."[4] Scholars acknowledge there are several competing theories regarding the reasons for the nation or "nation-ness" becoming "a dominant political category in many…parts of the world"; nevertheless, they generally agree that "despite the different ways of explaining the rise of the nation…nationalism as a political force has become powerful in the modern era."[5]

The challenge comes in defining the elements of identity of any particular group within a nation-state, or the collective identity of a nation, because "nation, nationality, nationalism—all have proved notoriously difficult to define, let alone analyze."[6] Jeffry Duncan agrees with this sentiment: "Identity is a notoriously difficult concept, linked to culture and history as much as to social psychology and politics."[7] Spinner-Halev and Theiss-Morse add, "A precise definition of *nation* is hard to pin down, partly because the distinctions between *nation, ethnic group,* and *state* are often opaque."[8] Determining and defining Russian identity is no exception; nevertheless, the remainder of this chapter will be devoted to expounding its elements.

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[4] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism,* rev. ed. (New York: Verso, 1991), 3.

[5] Spinner-Halev and Theiss-Morse, "National Identity," 516.

[6] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 3.

[7] Peter J. S. Duncan, "Contemporary Russian Identity Between East and West," *The Historical Journal* 48 (2005): 277–278.

[8] Spinner-Halev and Theiss-Morse, "National Identity," 516 (italics in the original).

C.   WHAT IS A RUSSIAN?

Daniel Rancour-Laferriere titles Chapter 13 of his book on Russian nationalism as, "Are Russians a Biological Unity?" He immediately answers in the negative and states, "There is no known way to identify "the Russians" anatomically, physiologically, or genetically. This is so if only because the biological heritage of Russians is extremely diverse." He continues the point by saying:

> It is a commonplace of Russian historical thinking to observe that Russians descend not only from Russians, but also from such heterogeneous groups as Finns, Ukrainians, Tatars, Mongols, Germans, Swedes, etc. Even in the heart of European Russia, in the area around Moscow and the upper Volga, the local Russians are described by ethnographers as having a decidedly mixed ancestry.[9]

In other words, a "Russian" is a psychological, social, or cultural construct, not a biological one. In reality, those calling themselves Russian (*russkii* as opposed to *rossiiskii*) are no more "ethnically" Russian than those calling themselves American are ethnically American. Certainly, there are those who define themselves as Native Americans, but even the people in these groups willingly divide themselves into "nations" as diverse as the peoples of Europe. Just as it is in the United States, where being an American means ascribing to an idea, as opposed to clinging to a particular ethnic background, so, too, it is in Russia, despite protestations to the contrary.

D.   THE ELEMENTS OF THE RUSSIAN IDENTITY

Although identity is a particularly difficult concept to quantify and define, there are some characteristics that have led to or influenced what might be called the current-day Russian identity. In the following analysis, the origins of these influences will be broken down into four major periods: From Antiquity to the Empire, the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union, and the Post-Soviet Era or the Russian Federation.

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[9] Daniel Rancour-Laferriere, *Russian Nationalism From an Interdisciplinary Perspective: Imagining Russia* (New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2000), 89.

1.   From Antiquity to the Empire

As if by design to complicate the search for Russian identity, or perhaps to underscore that it truly is a psychological and not a physical or biological construct, little is known about the true origins of the Slavs. From the earliest known history of the Slavs, their story is one of outside domination and conquest. During the eighth and ninth centuries of the Common Era, "many East Slavic tribes paid tribute to the Khazars, a Turkic-speaking people who adopted Judaism about A.D. 740 and lived in the southern Volga and Caucasus regions."[10] Also, by the ninth century, Scandinavian warriors and merchants, known as Varangians, had established themselves at Novgorod and began moving south to extend their authority to Kiev. The Varangians were able to expel the Khazars, establish a commercial treaty with the Byzantine Empire, and establish control over the trade routes from the Black Sea to the Baltic. Because of the lack of a reliable historical record, "historians have debated the role of the Varangians in the establishment of Kievan Rus'. Most Russian historians—especially in the Soviet era—have stressed the Slavic influence in the development of the state. Although Slavic tribes had formed their own regional jurisdictions by 860, the Varangians accelerated the crystallization of Kievan Rus' ".[11] Regardless, the Varangians and their decedents, known as the Rurik dynasty, ruled Kievan Rus' and the surrounding areas until 1598.

In 988, Prince Vladimir Christianized Kievan Rus'; however, Vladimir accepted Orthodoxy as opposed to Catholicism, placing Kievan Rus' and its successor states forever outside the sway of the Holy Roman Empire and many of the Western ideas that developed as a result of Rome's influence in the West. In addition, the Orthodoxy accepted by Vladimir and Kievan Rus' quickly evolved into something different and distinct from the Orthodoxy of Byzantium. Eventually, Russian Christians came to see themselves as the protectors of Christianity. They felt that both Constantinople and Rome had strayed from the true meaning and purpose of Christianity. It is interesting to note, that even in modern Russian, when the word "Christianity" (*khristianstvo*) is used, it

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[10] Federal Research Division of the Library of Congress, "Country Studies: Russia," Library of Congress, http://countrystudies.us/russia/2.htm.

[11] Ibid.

often carries the meaning "Russian Orthodox" not "Christian" in the catholic sense. In fact, in the 1400s with the waning and fall of the Byzantine Empire, Russia began to see itself as the last bastion of the faith, even proclaiming Moscow as the "Third Rome." Furthermore, believers of the Russian version of Orthodoxy saw (and still see) suffering as a means to come closer to Christ. Only through suffering can one truly experience the divine. This idea stands in stark contrast to the Western understanding of Christianity, where Christ is seen as one who has suffered for mankind so that mankind itself does not have to suffer. This idea of suffering permeates much of Russia culture even outside of religious contexts. In fact, some observers of Russia would argue that Russians are not happy unless they are suffering.

Even though the ruling princes in Kievan Rus', Muscovy, and Novgorod were Orthodox Christians and intermarried with both Byzantine and European families, they were also significantly influenced by the conquests of the Mongol Golden Horde. From about 1220 to approximately 1480, Kievan Rus' continued under the domination of the Mongols from the east. While Novgorod was never occupied, it did pay tribute to the Golden Horde and was influenced by contact with the easterners—all while having to contend with Western incursions form German and Polish invaders. Furthermore, at the beginning of the Mongol occupation, Muscovy (later Moscow) was a small trading outpost. The Mongol domination of other parts of Rus' and Novgorod allowed Moscow to become powerful enough to eventually throw off the Mongol yoke and seize control of the lands around it, including Novgorod and Tver', paving the way for Ivan IV to be the first ruler formally crowned as "Tsar of all Russia" in 1547.

Although this history of Rus' before the advent of the Russian Empire has been quite brief, there are some important points to be made within the context of understanding Russian identity. First, a significant portion of this period in history is characterized by outside domination and conquest from peoples on all sides. Second, that domination also brought with it lasting cultural influences, especially from the East; and finally, the yoke of bondage was eventually thrown off without external help, demonstrating to Russians that they must rely on themselves and cannot depend on anyone else.

2. The Russian Empire

The history of the Russian Empire is rich and exciting; however, it will only be touched on here to bring out those elements that have had the most significant effect on shaping Russian identity, beginning with the reign of Peter the Great at the end of the seventeenth century. Until Peter became Tsar, Russia was somewhat isolated from the West and was certainly lagging behind most Western countries in terms of technology and modernization. Peter was greatly enamored of the West from the time in his youth, when he would go to the outskirts of Moscow to visit the ordered areas of the foreign artisans there. He felt that much of Russia was backward and inferior to what the West had to offer. As Tsar, he made every effort to bring both Western social customs and Western technological advancements to Russia. He even founded his namesake city with the intention that it be a "Window to the West." Furthermore, Peter continued the Russian tradition of using the Church as to tool to legitimize his political goals. He transformed it into "a servant of the state" by making it a just "another branch of Russia's civil government."[12]

By importing Western ideas and subjugating the Church to the state, Peter the Great presided over a secular revolution that struck Old Russia with full force, moving it from a nation that "had faced south and east toward Byzantium into a nation and a culture that looked firmly westward to Europe."[13] Peter's reforms changed "how men and women behaved in public and private, how they spent their leisure hours, and even what they ate and how they dressed."[14] Peter's reforms also set the stage for the conflict that continues to animate discussions of Russian identity today—that of Slavophile versus Westernizer.

The secular revolution that flourished under Peter the Great continued for some time after his death and left an indelible mark; it touched all areas of Russian culture and civilization—even language was not immune. Until the mid-nineteenth century, French

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[12] W. Bruce Lincoln, *Between Heaven and Hell: The Story of a Thousand Years of Artistic Life in Russia* (New York: Viking, 1998), 62.

[13] Lincoln, *Between Heaven and Hell*, 53.

[14] Ibid.

and German were spoken more often in the parlors of aristocrats and royalty than was Russian. In fact, not until literary greats like Lomonosov and Pushkin made Russian accessible and acceptable did many in the aristocracy abandon the tongues of Western Europe as their primary means of communication.

The Slavophiles began to make their mark on nineteenth-century Russian as well, advocating a return to "traditional" Russian roots and values away from the decadence and debauchery of the West. Geoffrey Hosking characterizes well the dichotomy between the opposing viewpoints. He states:

> The crucial difference between Slavophiles and Westerners was over the question whether, in borrowing from European culture, Russia was denying its own nature, as the Slavophiles believed, or on the contrary taking vital steps for its own renewal and development.[15]

Russians have never resolved the conflict between these two incompatible ideas, and the concepts have continued to clash with one another through the remainder of Russian history to the present day.

3.   The Soviet Union

Egalitarianism is an integral part of the Russian psyche, and Russians seem to have an almost inveterate drive to subjugate the needs of individual to the needs of the group. This idea of the primacy of the group was cultivated in the peasant *mir*. As Richard Pipes describes, "The Russian peasant [had]…a weakly developed sense of personal identity," and for the peasant, the *mir* was both his village commune and his world.[16] In the *mir*, "The community restrained the unsocial impulses of the [peasant]: the collective was superior to its individual members."[17] Furthermore, throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, landowners had cultivated what Hosking characterizes as a "joint responsibility," between themselves and the peasants tied to their lands to maintain order and minimize problems. This relationship "colored the peasant

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[15] Geoffrey Hosking, *Russia and the Russians: A History* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001), 277.

[16] In Russian, *mir* means both "village commune" and "the world."

[17] Richard Pipes, *Russia under the Old Regime,* 2nd ed. (New York: Penguin Books USA Inc., 1995), 158.

outlook on all aspects of life: economics, work patterns, law, property and authority. Its principles were embodied in the village assembly, the *skhod*, which consisted of all the heads of households."[18] According to Hosking, this arrangement "generated a mentality which emphasized risk minimization, egalitarianism, and dependence on patronage."[19] Even though the Marxist-Leninist ideology of the Soviet regime was, as Martin Malia points out, "fundamentally and aggressively antipeasant," Soviet leaders were able to use the social structure that existed in the *mir* to their advantage because it was tailor-made for communism.[20]

In addition to retaining the familiar decision structure of the *mir*, Soviet Party leaders retained a familiar means of controlling the movement of its citizens. In the *mir*, peasants were prohibited from leaving without an internal passport issued by the head of their household. The Soviets used regulations that echoed this idea, "where kolkhoz members [were] not issued regular passports and [could not] move away without authorization."[21]

Trappings from the *mir* were not the only ideas that carried over into the Soviet Union. The contest between Slavophiles and Westernizers was as robust during Soviet times as it is now, even if it took a different form: "[The debate] divided Russian socialism between Marxists and Populists, Russian Marxists between Mensheviks and Bolsheviks, and Bolsheviks between opponents and followers of Stalin. The controversy has [always] been between those who believed in Europe and those who believed in Russia."[22]

When considering Russian identity and its relation to the Soviet Union, one cannot overemphasize the importance of World War II. Victory over Nazi Germany remains a crowning achievement of the former Soviet Union and served to foster a strong

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[18] Hosking, *Russia and the Russians*, 255.

[19] Ibid., 226.

[20] Martin Malia, *The Soviet Tragedy: A History of Socialism in Russia, 1917-1991* (New York: The Free Press, 1994), 52.

[21] Pipes, *Russia Under the Old Regime*, 164n.

[22] Yale Richmond, *From Nyet to Da: Understanding the New Russia,* 4th ed. (Boston: Intercultural Press, 2009), 54.

sense of national pride in its citizens. Benjamin Forest and Juliet Johnson encapsulate perfectly the roll the war played in shaping the Soviet psyche:

> Indeed, from 1945 to through the mid-1980s, World War II (which Russians call the Great Patriotic War) was perhaps the single most powerful element in the constitutive national narrative of the USSR. In short, the memorials to this war were among the most potent sites for the construction of a Soviet national identity.[23]

Even today, if you engage someone with ties to the former Red Army (or to the current Russian Federation military, for that matter) to argue that it was the United States and not the Soviet Union that won World War II, the discussion might very well become quite heated. Even suggesting that the Soviet Army did not defeat the Nazis without assistance form other nations could turn a pleasant discussion into a vehement argument.[24]

4. The Post-Soviet Era or the Russian Federation

In the Post-Soviet era, Russian national identity has taken on a slightly different form. Initially, the historical contest between Slavophiles and Westernizers evolved into a debate between Eurasianists and Westernizers. The Westernizers' position changed little from the past: Russia is a backward nation (even though it possesses nuclear weapons) that would thoroughly benefit from democracy and a free-market economy in addition to the Western ideas and values of enlightenment, rationalism, rule of law, etc. The Eurasianists' position, on the other hand, is summed up well by Dmitri Trenin: "To proponents of [neo-Eurasianism], Russia stood as a unique bridge state, spanning the huge continent and naturally mediating between the East and the West, North and South."[25] However, Trenin argues that the Eurasian idea is defunct and that Russia is

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[23] Benjamin Forest and Juliet Johnson, "Unraveling the Threads of History: Soviet-Era Monuments and Post-Soviet National Identity in Moscow," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 92 (2002): 524

[24] As happened to me when I got into just such a discussion with a lieutenant in the United States Navy who is now a U.S. citizen, but had previously served as a conscript in the Soviet military before emigrating to the United States with his parents. Not only had he served, but his father and grandfather had served proudly as officers in the Soviet military as well.

[25] Dmitri V. Trenin, *Getting Russia Right* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2007), 73.

once again a standalone power that "resists assimilation and absorption into the West and abhors foreign domination." He continues, "It wants equality with the world's premier powers. It seeks a friendly neighborhood in which it feels comfortable."[26] In other words, Russia intends to stand on its own two feet and make its own way in the world—regardless of what other nations think its path should be.

Despite the tension between those who would look outside of Russia to find its path and those who would look inward, there is one particular facet of Russian identity that has been a constant throughout history and has become quite prevalent in the recent past. As Anne Clunan writes, "Post-Soviet Russian political elites were clearly split over what Russia's national identity should be in the aftermath of collapse of the Soviet Union. They evinced little agreement on Russia's political purpose or sources of national self-esteem beyond great power status."[27] That is to say, regardless of their stance on Russia's national identity, the political elites all wanted one thing in common—respect on the world stage commensurate with the position the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union had held in the past.

E.   CONCLUSION

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, delineating and describing national or social identity is a tricky subject. In the case of Russia, it is exceptionally difficult, as demonstrated by the cursory treatment of Russian history. There are, however, some things of which we can be sure. First, Russia is as much an idea as it is a nation. Second, Russia is a diverse entity that does not fit neatly into either an Eastern or Western construct. Finally, respect is paramount to those who attempt to define Russia's national identity today. The following chapter addresses many of the aspects of identity outlined in this one, but does so in the context of examining Soviet language and related policy choices from the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 to the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991.

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[26] Trenin, *Getting Russia Right*, 75.

[27] Anne Clunan, *The Social Construction of Russia's Resurgence: Aspirations, Identity, and Security Interests* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009) 73.

III.   FROM THE BOLSHEVIKS TO PERESTROIKA

A.   BEFORE THE BOLSHEVIKS

In order to understand the genesis of Soviet language policy and Lenin's stance on the languages and peoples of the newly created Soviet Union, it is necessary to understand the status of languages in the Russian Empire before the Bolshevik Revolution. For some time in the Russian Empire, Russian was of no particular significance to the aristocracy, especially in Moscow and Saint Petersburg. In fact, during the early nineteenth century, some members of the Russian aristocracy held French in higher regard than Russian, and most likely spoke it better as well. It is interesting to note that even in the novels of Leo Tolstoy, when one of his characters from the aristocracy speaks French, Tolstoy writes the dialogue in French as opposed to Russian (Tolstoy wanted to be true to the time period he was depicting). In was not until the second half of the nineteenth century, near the end of the Romanov dynasty, that Russian truly became the official language of the empire—with a few exceptions, such as in the Baltic regions, Poland, and Finland.

During the latter portion of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, however, "Russian was the official language for almost the whole Russian Empire," and "languages other than Russian had no rights whatsoever."[28] With the absolute authority of the Tsar waning, Russification began to play a more prominent role and the government began efforts to "Russify" or make culturally Russian as much of the empire as possible in an attempt to gain back some of the influence and authority that the Tsar had lost. Russification, of course, also included attempts to make those who were not "ethnically" Russian learn and speak Russian as well. These practices were not well received in vast areas of the empire, and an anti-Russian attitude was prevalent in large portions of the empire at the time Lenin rose to power.

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[28] Bernard Comrie, *The Languages of the Soviet Union* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 21.

B.   LENIN, LANGUAGE, AND PEOPLES

Throughout its history, the Soviet Union was a multilingual and a multiethnic entity. The 1989 Soviet census reported over 100 ethnic groups, each to a greater or lesser degree speaking its own language and celebrating its own cultural heritage. These numbers are also reflective of how the Soviet Union looked in 1918. Many linguists believe, in fact, that there were perhaps as many as 200 languages spoken at the time of the Bolshevik Revolution. Nevertheless, the number of ethic groups and languages did not concern Lenin, per se, because he saw Marxist ideology as the unifying element for the nascent Communist movement. Lenin believed, as Marx preached, that Communism would transcend national and ethnic identities and that all nations would eventually come together as a global proletariat. Nationalism was only useful for Lenin when he could use it "to advance the proletarian cause."[29]

In his understanding of nationalism, Lenin saw the destructive potential of Russian chauvinism (read Russian nationalism) regarding his plans for a supranational or perhaps an "anational" Communist state. For this reason he took great care to ensure that all languages spoken in the Soviet Union received equal status. In fact, "Lenin believed that no single language should be given the status of a *state* language; rather, he promoted national equality and self-determinism."[30] Lenin purported to believe that each of the languages of the peoples of the Soviet Union was inviolable. This idea was even enshrined in the 1936 Soviet Constitution after his death. The Constitution guaranteed the right to all Soviet citizens the use of—and instruction in—their native tongue.

However, the multinational nature of the Soviet Union still posed a significant two-pronged obstacle for Lenin and the other Soviet leaders as they set out on their path to the Marxist utopia in which they so strongly believed. The Soviet Union was extensively multilingual, and much of the population was uneducated and illiterate. In order to indoctrinate the masses in the Communist ideology, the people had to be educated. As Comrie states:

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[29] Grenoble, *Language Policy*, 35.

[30] Ibid., 36.

One of the main practical problems facing the new regime was the need to unify the country, so all of its peoples would feel part of the new development, contributing to it and drawing benefit from it. Obviously, one requirement dictated by this, especially in view of the extreme centralization of the Soviet state, is the existence of a common language to facilitate communication among members of different ethnic groups, and the obvious choice for this language was Russian [as it was the native language of the largest group of Soviet citizens].[31]

Despite Lenin's pronounced dedication to the equality of languages, the Party leadership needed a lingua franca to accomplish its aim; in addition, the Party was already reluctant to cede any governmental control, including that over education, to the many different nationalities.

The Russian speaking majority, which had tremendous influence on policy formation and resource distribution, "encouraged" native language development in the Republics, but did it in such a way that the languages acquired a tremendous number of Russian lexical items and grammatical patterns as well as Russian orthography. Nevertheless, it should be noted that under Lenin there was a short period of time during which many of the Central Asian languages, spoken predominantly by Islamic peoples, were converted from their traditional Arabic scripts to a Latin-based orthography. Latin orthography was chosen in order to avoid the appearance by the Party that the changes were "part of a policy of linguistic, cultural, and religious Russification."[32] A movement even sprang up in Russia proper to convert Russian to a Latin-based alphabet as well, but this never gained any popular support. The Latin alphabets' tenures were fleeting, though, and after Lenin's death, many of the languages were forced in a few short years to move to Cyrillic orthography; the rationale given for this was to make learning Russian easier for those who did not speak it as a first language.

C.   THE STALIN YEARS

As Stalin came to power, he began to promote ideas and implement policies that shifted emphasis away from all languages having equal status toward the idea that when

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[31] Comrie, *The Languages of the Soviet Union*, 22.

[32] Ibid., 23.

the proletariat ruled the world, "a common language [would] begin to take shape, a common language which Stalin envision[ed] as an international lingua franca for economic, political and cultural cooperation." Stalin anticipated, or at least purported, that this common language would exist alongside the individual national languages. This idea fit well with his Marxist definition that a nation is not necessarily a state; rather, it is a "specifically stable community of people with a common territory, language, economic life and 'psychological make-up.' "[33] Stalin's view that a nation is an entity with a common language and, in Soviet terms, a common ideology, but not necessarily a state, is particularly important as it became the foundation for many, if not most, of the policies enacted regarding language throughout the remaining history of the Soviet Union. In addition, determining which groups qualified as nations allowed the Soviet leadership to determine which languages held equal status with Russian as "national languages" entitled to legal rights and privileges. Furthermore, it created a basis for including (or excluding) groups when allocating language-related state resources.

As early as 1923, after Stalin's rise to the head of the party and even before Lenin's death, the Soviet regime began what it called *korennizatsiia,* also known as "nativization" or "indigenization," to educate the native populations in their mother tongues and move them into the workforce, especially the Soviet Party structures. This policy recognized the "national languages" as equal with Russian while creating with "the utmost speed, a larger and better educated labor force so as to rapidly industrialize the country."[34] The program encountered many problems, however. Much of the outlying population was illiterate and poorly educated to begin with, so they had to be taught to read before they could be educated in other matters. In addition, the dearth of qualified teachers who spoke the national languages and the absence of adequate teaching materials written in the mother tongues required many of the classes to be taught in Russian, which most of the students did not understand.

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[33] Grenoble, *Language Policy*, 43.

[34] Ibid., 44.

By the late 1920s, *korennizatsiia* was abandoned, although not officially, in favor of Russification. As Grenoble states, "Soviet nationality policies were changed, and Russian language and culture were officially promoted as the best means to a Soviet society. The nativization policy was no longer valued as an absolute goal in and of itself, and it was greatly diminished, to be eventually phased out entirely."[35] This shift was made abundantly clear when Stalin addressed the XVIIth Party Congress in 1934 and signaled a clear break from Lenin regarding the Party's approach to Russian chauvinism as the greatest threat to the health of the Soviet Union. Stalin instead professed that the greater danger was uncontested nationalism, in particular small-nation nationalism detracting from the greater goal of a united "communist nation."

This was the basis for Stalin's idea of "national in form, socialist in content." In other words, the national languages still enjoyed positions of primacy, at least in theory, but the Republics in which they were spoken needed to comport with Stalin's view of the direction in which the Soviet Union should progress. It is interesting to note, however, that during World War II, "the leadership of the Soviet Union decided to freeze the compulsory introduction of Russian and let other languages alone, partly because it didn't have the means to enforce Russian, but mainly because it did not wish to awaken opposition in the Republics."[36] Despite Stalin's desire to make Russian the lingua franca, he understood that his attempts to crowd out the national languages could cause serious damage to the Soviet Union at a time when unity was absolutely necessary. Only after World War II did Stalin return to his strong push for Russian; this push continued until his death in 1953.

D.   KHRUSHCHEV'S VISION

Khrushchev's accession to the position of Party leader after Stalin's death gave him the opportunity to disavow many of Stalin's unpopular policies and to distance the Party form practices that many found heinous during Stalin's reign. This distancing

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[35] Grenoble, *Language Policy*, 44–45.

[36] Jacob M. Landau and Barbara Kellner-Heinkele, *Politics of Language in the ex-Soviet Muslim States* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2001), 54.

facilitated changes in the realm of language policy as much as anywhere else in the Soviet Union. Khrushchev and his advisors understood, as Lenin and Stalin did, that ethnic heterogeneity is a potential source of great instability; however, Khrushchev also believed that "one way out of this problem [was] to use language as a proxy for ethnicity."[37] Furthermore, Khrushchev and the Soviet leadership understood that "language [could be] a major element in the development of an ethnic community's political consciousness and a tool of state-building," but that it can also be "manipulated, elevated, and transformed in the interest of the state."[38]

The Soviet system was similar to many societies on a path of political modernization. As the masses became more educated, they wanted social mobility and the ability to participate politically; this meant that is was "desirable for the languages spoken by the masses to be congruent with those of the dominant elites." Making the languages of the masses congruent with those of the elites posed a tremendous problem for Soviet language planners because of the sheer number of "languages of the masses." At a minimum, the number included the titular language of each one of the fifteen Soviet Republics. For the Party leadership, "the choice of language and the question of whether minority languages should be maintained or discouraged [went] beyond the matter of mere political integration and touched upon the legitimacy of the national culture on which the language system is based."[39]

Up to this point in Soviet history, all of the national languages had held at least notional equality with Russian; however, Khrushchev introduced a policy shift to make Russian the language of the Soviet Union, although not necessarily the "official" language. Also up to this point, there had been no concerted push for a specifically Soviet culture with a specifically Soviet language, although many of the previous language policies had, in effect, attempted to move non-Russian Soviet citizens closer to the Russian ideal, even if official pronouncements stated otherwise. Khrushchev had a vision

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[37] David D. Laitin, "What is a Language Community?" *American Journal of Political Science* 44 (2000): 142.

[38] William Safran, "Language, Ideology, and State-Building: A Comparison of Policies in France, Israel, and the Soviet Union," *International Political Science Review* 13 (1992): 397.

[39] Safran, "Language, Ideology, and State-Building," 398.

for his Communist utopia; he imagined a Soviet Union that was united both politically and linguistically. In short, he wanted to create a Soviet culture to subsume all of the other cultures. To accomplish his goals, Khrushchev moved to make Russian the second national language of all the non-Russian speaking republics. This was palatable to the Party because some languages had come to be viewed as less viable than others and therefore deserved less support and protection. In addition, in the Party's view, the push for Russian would help strengthen its control over the outlying republics and encourage Soviet citizens to further integrate into Russian Soviet culture.

Khrushchev's ideas were enshrined into law with the Education Reforms of 1958-59, which stated that education in the mother tongue was no longer compulsory and that Russian was a required course of study where instruction in the native language was not abandoned. The consequence of this, in a practical sense, was that instruction in the national languages suffered in favor of increased Russian instruction. More than at any previous time, Russian held the de facto position of "the official language of the USSR and [it] occupied a central position in education and government," without being named as such. The reforms instituted by Khrushchev "represented an open move toward Russification of the country."[40] Khrushchev, who had started out distancing himself for Stalin's Russo-centric policies, eventually arrived at a Stalinesque policy of Russification.

E.   BREZHNEV AND THE 1970s

Brezhnev's ideas about language were strongly influenced by his predecessors, as well as by the academics of the time. According to some ethnographic studies, "Soviet sociologists have argued that the most desirable form of acculturation occurs among those non-Russians who have learned Russian at an early age."[41] In Brezhnev's view, the Russian language would cement, not just create, the unity of the Soviet culture and serve

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[40] Grenoble, *Language Policy*, 57–58.

[41] Roman Szporluk, "Dissent and the Non-Russian Nationalities," cited in Roman Solchanyk, "Russian Language and Soviet Politics," *Soviet Studies* 34 (1992): 24.

as an "effective accelerator of the drawing together of nations."[42] Party rhetoric had moved beyond Khrushchev's idea of a Soviet culture to the even more inclusive idea of a Soviet ethnic group. In fact, "one of the explicit goals formulated in the Brezhnev era was the establishment of a Soviet people (*sovetskii narod*) as emblematic of the development and fusion of the various nationalities into a supra-nationality."[43] That is, Brezhnev and his comrades in the Party leadership wanted to create a new ethnicity out of whole cloth to unite the peoples of Soviet Union in a way that Marxism and Communism had so far been unable to do. However, Brezhnev's goals cannot be seen as new or innovative:

> Brezhnev's Soviet nationality theory contains few original elements, being essentially a combination of Khrushchev's and Stalin's ideas. This combination, however, [had] produced a new, and much more solid, theoretical scaffolding in support of the superior position of Russian. At the same time, non-Russian languages [had] been theoretically disarmed and [were] now totally dependent on largely obsolete Leninist theories.[44]

Under Brezhnev, Soviet language policy in practice had arrived at a point completely at odds with the ideas espoused by Lenin. Nevertheless, the Brezhnev policy still comported with the long-held Russian view that language equals ethnicity (and by extension identity). Therefore, if all the peoples of the Soviet Union could be united under the same language, they all would become a single, united—and newly created— ethnicity.

To this end, Brezhnev continued to supplant native language instruction in non-Russian schools with Russian instruction, and he increased the number of institutions for which Russian was the only acceptable language of communication. Under Brezhnev, the Party had strayed so far from Lenin's original anti-Russian chauvinism position that now the native populations were expected to be bilingual in order to integrate with the Russian Soviet infrastructure, as opposed to Lenin's intention that Russians would be "bilingual if

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[42] Sh. R. Radishov, *Sovetskii Uzbekistan*, cited in Roman Solchanyk, "Russian Language and Soviet Politics," *Soviet Studies* 34 (1992): 25.

[43] Grenoble, *Language Policy*, 59.

[44] Isabella Kreindler, "The Changing Status of Language in the Soviet Union," *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 33 (1982): 16–17.

living in a non-Russian area."[45] However, the most telling blow to the status of national languages among the Republics was a change to the Soviet Constitution in 1977, which abrogated the right to use one's mother tongue and receive instruction in one's native language, replacing the "right" with the "opportunity."   Thus, "the 1977 Constitution, guarante[ed] only the possibility of access," not the right (even if the right was only notional), to the protection of one's native tongue. This change was followed in 1978 by a decree entitled, "On Measures for Further Improving the Study and Teaching of the Russian Language in the Union Republics," which, among other things, "mandated concrete, extensive measures for improving Russian-language teaching."[46] The 1978 decree was so pervasive that it even instituted Russian instruction at the pre-school level in an attempt to increase its proliferation.[47]

Despite these significant changes in Soviet policy, there was resistance to the perceived Russification of the Soviet Republics. This was especially visible in the Transcaucasus region, as evidenced by the battle over naming Georgian as the "state language" in the 1976 draft constitution of the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic. The original draft omitted any reference to Georgian as the state language, leading to a "language riot before the Government House in Tbilisi…[in 1978], which lasted about five hours" and involved up to 50,000 demonstrators. This also came on the heels of a Moscow-directed policy to disallow the publication of dissertations for advanced degrees at Tbilisi University in any language other than Russian. As a result of the demonstration, "the reference to the indigenous language being the 'state language' was restored to the state constitutions of Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaidzhan."[48]

F.   PERESTROIKA AND BEYOND

Soviet language policies continued relatively unchanged from the Brezhnev era until 1989. In fact, Party leadership paid them little attention, as evidenced by the number

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[45] Kreindler, "The Changing Status of Language," 9.

[46] Grenoble, *Language Policy*, 58.

[47] Landau and Kellner-Heinkele, *Politics of Language*, 56–57.

[48] Yarolsav Bilinsky, "Haste Makes Waste, or the Political Dangers of Accelerated Russification," *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 33 (1982): 65.

of Union Republics that began to assert their language independence from Moscow. By 1989, Moldova had changed its orthography back to Latin script and all of the Union Republics (other than the Russian Republic) had passed laws "granting [their] titular languages the status of state language." These actions finally provoked a response in April 1990, when "the central Soviet government reacted by enacting 'The law of the languages of the peoples of the USSR' which, for the first time, declared Russian to be *the* state language." Grenoble opines, however, "this was more a reaction to what the Soviet government viewed as separatist-nationalist tendencies in the individual republics," rather than an attempt at a clear, focused language policy."[49] While Grenoble's assertion does seem to characterize the most practical reasons for designating Russian as the state language, it misses a larger underlying point that the choice to enact such a law illustrates a broader historical propensity, among those who identify themselves as Russian (even during Soviet times), to turn to the "Russianness" of a particular issue to find its solution.

G.   CONCLUSION

It could certainly be argued that almost from the beginning of the Soviet Union, even before Lenin's death, all of the language policies pursued or enacted during its history may be seen as a creeping Russian nationalism (often times disguised as devotion to Marxism-Leninism or fealty to the Soviet cause) that attempted to co-opt all of the other republics in an effort to keep the Soviet Union from dissolving. The final law on language policy, enacted in April 1990, was perhaps the death knell to the Soviet Union, which had progressed, if one can call it progress, from "all languages are equal" to "Russian is the state language." The next chapter will discuss how the legacy of identity and lingua-centric nationalism have manifested themselves in the Russian Federation and the implications that may have for Russia's future.

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[49] Grenoble, *Language Policy*, 63.

IV. THE RUSSIAN TODAY?

A. THE END OF THE SOVIETS

In his article "The State and Language Policy," Milton Esman communicates a truth that Vladimir Lenin understood well as key to the continued and long-term success of the Soviet Union:

> Because language is a distinctive property of most ethnic communities and is at the core of ethnic identity and ethnic pride, the relative status of language can assume enormous symbolic importance in ethnically divided societies. The recognition of one language as "national" or "official" is not a mere matter of convenience or of facilitating communication; it symbolizes respect for the community it represents…. There are few issues, aside from religion, that can mobilize and sustain such passion as the status of language because it is central to collective identity.[50]

In terms of language and identity, the ideal communist state sought by the founders of the Soviet Union was perhaps doomed from the very beginning. Marxist ideology held that the proletariat would, of its own volition, come together in a united group to overcome nationalism, capitalism, and every other "ill" that plagued the world. However, as the Party leadership shepherded the Soviet Union along its path of political development, it found coercion a much easer vessel through which to achieve its ends than persuasion. Yarolsav Bilinsky was prophetic in 1981, when he stated, "The Brezhnev regime sees in the Russian language and culture a cement for the multinational, multilingual Soviet Empire. In the long run, however, forcible Russification may turn out to be…the acid that will dissolve the ties that have bound the hundred-odd nationalities together since 1917."[51]

In the final analysis, it is difficult to say why Soviet leaders embarked on the eventually self-destructive course of attempting to assimilate by force the great number of nationalities and languages present in the Soviet Union. Perhaps it was because of a

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[50] Milton J. Esman, "The State and Language Policy," *International Political Science Review* 13 (1992): 382.

[51] Yaroslav Bilinsky, "Expanding the Use of Russian or Russification?" *Russian Review* 40 (1981): 332.

latent, or even overt, Russian nationalism that permeated the Soviet leadership, or because the sizeable Russian portion of the Soviet population continued to make fewer and fewer distinctions between its own Russian heritage and its identification as citizens of the Soviet Union; or perhaps it was simply easier to coerce than to persuade. The irony of it all, however, is that much of the assimilation desired by the Soviet elite would have most likely happened if it would have been allowed to happen voluntarily; but in the end, Russian language and culture eventually became the divisive force that Lenin had warned against in the beginning. Political leaders in the Russian Federation face a similar predicament within the borders of their new county with its old and rich history: how do they assimilate and not alienate the vast numbers of people in the federation who do not consider themselves to be "ethnic Russians?"

B.   THE NEW RUSSIAN STATE

Commenting on the downfall of the Soviet Union, William Safran notes that with its collapse, "Soviet language policy has become largely irrelevant."[52] Not only is this a rather obvious statement, it also fails to recognize that even though the Soviet Union dissolved, many of the problems left to its successor state did not disappear along with it, language issues included. By the time the Soviet Union collapsed, most of those people living in what is now the Russian Federation identified themselves as Soviet citizens— their citizenship in the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic (RSFSR) was secondary or ancillary. This was different from the other republics, where, for example, Georgians or Latvians or Moldovans saw themselves as Georgians and Latvians and Moldovans first and Soviet Citizens second. This lack of individual identification in the Russian republic was not accidental. As John Dunlop points out, "This identification [as Soviet versus Russian] had been reinforced structurally: unlike the other fourteen union republics. The RSFSR…had deliberately not been given many of the institutions enjoyed by the other republics," such as no Russian KGB, no Russian MVD, and no Russian

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52 Safran, "Language, Ideology, and State-Building," 404.

Academy of Sciences, as well as no television channels or radio stations tailored specifically to the interests of ethnic Russians.[53] In a sense, ethnic Russians had lost, or at least misplaced, their Russianness.

The newly formed Russian Federation quickly recovered, however. In addition, the dynamics and demographics had changed as well. During Soviet times, ethnic Russians made up a small majority of the citizens of the entire Soviet Union and each ethnic group, including Russian, was generally concentrated in a specific geographic area. In the Russian Federation (at the time of its formation), by contrast, ethnic Russians made up approximately 80 percent of the population and constituted a majority in all but 5 of the Federation's 21 ethnic Republics. Furthermore, ethnic Russians "have no single region that they dominate but are instead divided into 57 provinces that coexist with the 32 regions designated as ethnic minority homelands as of mid-2004."[54]

Nevertheless, the new makeup did not dissuade lawmakers from codifying protections for those within the Russian Federation territory whose native language was other than Russian. Those responsible for forming language policy in the Russian Federation seem to have learned both from their more recent Soviet predecessors in understanding the power of a single unifying language and from Lenin's ideas regarding the protection of indigenous languages. For example, Article 68 of the Russian Federation Constitution states that Russian shall be the state language of the Russian Federation; however, the republics that are a part of the Federation have a right to establish their own state languages, which may be used by public authorities alongside the state language of the Russian Federation. In addition, all peoples of the Russian Federation are guaranteed the right to maintain their native language and conditions for its study and development.[55] Furthermore, in 1992, the Russian Federation essentially

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[53] John B. Dunlop, "Russia: Confronting a Loss of Empire, 1987-1991," *Political Science Quarterly* 108 (Winter 1993-1994): 603.

[54] Henry E. Hale, "The Makeup and Breakup of Ethnofederal States: Why Russia Survives Where the USSR Fell," *Perspectives of Politics* 3 (2005): 56.

[55] Evgeny Kuzmin and Ekaterina Plys, compilers, "Preservation of Linguistic Diversity: Russian Experience," *Commission of the Russian Federation for UNESCO Russian Committee of the UNESCO Information for All Program Interregional Library Cooperation Centre* (Moscow: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2008), 9.

adopted wholesale the final law on language passed in the Soviet Union shortly before its collapse, titled "On the languages of peoples of the RSFSR." The 1992 law, and changes made later in 1998, did little to alter the substance of the Soviet law; instead changes were made to strike references to the RSFSR and to bring the wording of the law in line with the language of the Constitution of the Russian Federation.[56] The 1992 law stated, among other things, that "the languages of the Russian Federation peoples shall be under the shelter of the state" and that "the state shall promote the development of national languages, bilingualism, and multilingualism inside the Russian Federation territory."[57]

The wording in the Constitution and the adoption of the 1992 law established, from the outset, a legally mandated common language that would serve as a lingua franca across the Federation, while also guaranteeing that indigenous languages would have the protection and patronage of the federal government. The establishment of Russian as lingua franca would not happen over time (as during the Soviet era) by the encroachment of a set of policies and laws whose surreptitious goals were to crowd out indigenous languages. Rather, the position occupied by the Russian language was articulated clearly and unambiguously from the very beginning. Perhaps one reason this has so far met with little opposition is that the Soviets were effective enough at Russification within the RSFSR that the continuation of Russian as a lingua franca was of no particular threat and the minority populations genuinely welcomed a renewed opportunity to recultivate their native tongues. The acceptance of Russian as a state language and lingua franca may have also been facilitated by the attempt of many Russian Federation leaders to identify its citizens in civic as opposed to ethnic terms; i.e., *rossiianin* instead of *russkii*.

The most recent law to affect language policy, titled "On the State Language of the Russian Federation," passed in 2005, has done little to change the practical relationship between the state and the minority languages; however, it has fortified the position of Russian as the language of the Federation. Among other things, the law ensures the use of Russian as the state language throughout the territory of the Federation

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[56] I must note here that I am making this claim based on my limited Russian language skills to read and interpret Russian legal statutes.

[57] Kuzmin and Plys, "Preservation of Linguistic Diversity," 10.

and defines spheres of its obligatory usage. While the law still allows and protects the use of other national languages set forth in the constitutions of the individual republics, it requires that they be used alongside Russian in the above referenced obligatory contexts and mandates that the content in both languages for any given communication must be identical.

C.   ROSSIIANE VERSUS RUSSKIE

Finally, I turn to the problem of distinguishing between ethnic Russians (*russkie*) and Russian Federation citizens (*rossiiane*) in general. In the Russian Federation, there seems to be an evolving dualistic approach to the "identity question." In some respects, political leaders have linked identity with language, as seen in both the "protections" given to minority languages and the "prominence" afforded Russian. Nevertheless, singling out or protecting ethnolinguistic identities with regard to language laws is contrasted by the conspicuous lack of any reference to ethnic definitions or linguistic requirements for Russian Federation citizenship in the law adopted on November 28, 1991. This law refers to Russian citizens in strictly civic terms, i.e., *rossiiane*.[58]

Defining citizens in purely civic terms is certainly a laudable attempt to bring all within Russia's borders under one common umbrella, but the "commitment towards encouraging a civic identity among citizens of the [Russian Federation is] not shared by the communist and nationalist opposition." The opposition groups are certainly not unified in their attempts to define Russian identity, but they all have at their core a common element—language.[59] Those who hope to create a civic identity for all Russian Federation citizens also face opposition from the non-Russian autonomies, whose leaders argue, "that the notion of a civic nation amounts to imperialist russification in disguise."[60] This sentiment is further voiced by non-Russian groups, as noted by Paul Goble in his September 25, 2009, "Window on Eurasia" Weblog entry, when the pro-Kremlin youth organization Nashi "announced plans to hold a 'Russian March' on

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[58] Vera Tolz. "Politicians' Conceptions of the Russian Nation," in *Contemporary Russian Politics: A Reader*, ed. Archie Brown (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 355–356.

[59] Tolz, "Politicians' Conceptions of the Russian Nation," 359.

[60] Ibid., 362.

November 4 [2009] in order to put a different ideological face on Russian nationalism than that which xenophobic groups…have given such events in past years." According to Goble, Nashi members intended to march in support of defining all Russian Federation citizens as *russkie*. He quotes one Nashi leader as saying, "We want to take away this name [*russkii*] from the nationalists because for them a[n ethnic] Russian is someone who had eyes and nose of a definite shape. For us, [ethnic] Russians are all those who have citizenship in the Russian Federation."[61] Those groups who identify themselves as not ethnically Russian, but at the same time citizens of the Russian Federation, will most certainly balk at any efforts they perceive as attempts by the majority ethnic Russian population to further Russify them.

This youth demonstration serves as a microcosm for the larger "identity issue" that confronts Russian leaders. As Russia's political leaders struggle to define what exactly a Russian citizen is and how to properly refer to him or her, the nature and status of the majority and minority language populations will most certainly hold a prominent position in the national discussion. Perhaps this is because, as an international relations instructor at Saint Petersburg University suggests, Russians (whether they be *russkie or rossiiane*) have yet to define for themselves what exactly it means to be a citizen of the Russian Federation and more specifically, what are the "universal markers of Russianness."[62] Until all citizens of the Russian Federation can agree what it is to be Russian in the civic as opposed to the ethnic sense, "language as an instrument for change" will continue to be "more preoccupied with *national* rather than *civic* identity," and this will remain a Moscow's Achilles' heel for a long time to come.[63]

D. CONCLUSION

Russian history, from Kievan Rus' to the current Russian Federation, is nothing if not the chronicle of a group of peoples struggling for an identity. Even today, leaders of

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[61] Andrei Kozenko, "Marsh Nashionalistov," *Kommersant*, September 29, 2009, http://www.kommersant.ru/doc.aspx?DocsID=1242556.

[62] Dmitry Lanko, "Sootechestvenniki kak natsional'nyi mif," *Neva* 8 (2009), http://magazines.russ.ru/neva/2009/8/loa8.html.

[63] Michael S. Gorham, "Natsiia ili snikerizatsiia? Identity and Perversion in the Language Debates of Late-and Post-Soviet Russia," *Russian Review* 59 (2000): 619.

the Russian Federation strive to perpetuate the Russian Diaspora and protect the "Russian" populations of former Soviet Republics, especially in places such as the Baltics, Ukraine, and Moldova. While it may seem that the Russian leadership is acting in a schizophrenic manner by trying to downplay ethnic distinctions within its own boarders in favor of civic ones while attempting to magnifying the ethnic identity of *russkie* in its near abroad, in reality, it is the Kremlin continuing the Soviet policy of using language as a tool to homogenize those who are near the seat of power and exert pressure and influence in places that are removed from it.

Studying the way Russian leaders approach language, language policy, and ethnic and national identity is not only important, it is necessary because it gives us unique insight into the Russian political system. It is outside the scope of this thesis, but future research that investigates how the different political groups in Russia—whether nationalist or globalist, Slavophile or Westernizer, Eurasianist or Europeanist—use language and its status to achieve their own ends, could yield significant dividends in comprehending the Russian political system, the Russian psyche, and in the end provide a clearer picture of Russian identity. As with any endeavor, international relations included, the more complete one's understanding of the issues and individuals involved, the more likely one will be to arrive at an outcome that is most favorable.

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